

Now They Rotate Ranchers And Loans As Well As Pastures

By Monte Noelke

2-6-69

Page 5

MERTZON — The Shortgrass Country weather scene is featuring cold dry northers. On the Pacific Coast the whole countryside is under water, but down here the threat of another drouth hangs heavily on our minds.

To provide a measure of drouth insurance, some of the ranchers have gone into a pasture rotation system. Government soil savers, the Soil Conservation Service men, have talked quite a few hombres into stocking two-thirds of their ranch while leaving the remaining portion vacant.

Rotation plans, however, aren't new in this country. Ever since the land was fenced, both the livestock and the people have undergone rotations.

The dry scourge of the 1950s was one of the most famous examples. Stockmen not only rotated pastures in those dreadful days, but many of them changed states. Cattlemen from Texas tore off into the states north of the Panhandle that reservation Indians began to wonder if they were going to be pushed on again. North-country farmers who owned as much as a wood lot found they could stack in Texas cattle about as thick as they once ricked firewood. It was some rotation. The banks were trying to shuffle paper off on government agencies; credit managers in feed houses struggled to keep from going into the "past-due gyrations"; in fact anyone vaguely connected with the livestock industry was likely to be found having some sort of spiral. Doctors thought nothing of treating 40 cases a day of a head-swimming disorder called the "dry siege counter-clockwise vertigo."

For all-out spinning, rotating, or what have you, the Shortgrass Country at that time had the whole world beat.

Don't misunderstand. The soil experts of today are trying to help. Once they find a substitute for wet weather and green grass, their fame among stockmen will spread far and wide. When forced rotation is replaced by volunteer rotation, the floral companies won't be able to handle all the deliveries to SCS offices; and every time a rancher sees an SCS agent, he'll want to buy him a new hat.

As it is, the dry weather puts us all to marking time until spring. Feed trucks roar across the grasslands by day. At night, many a citizen is wondering if another great rotation period isn't close at hand.